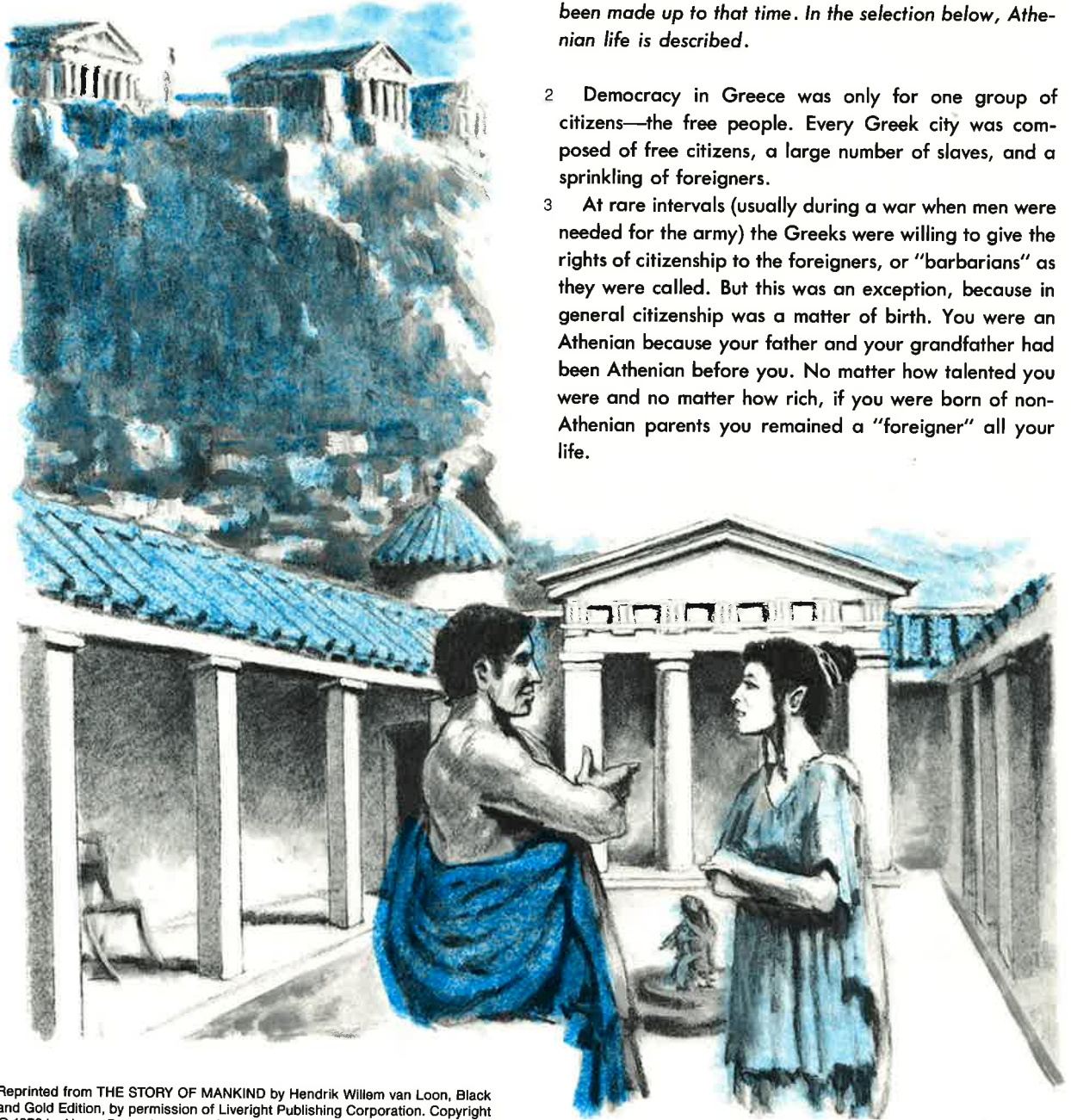


# How the Greeks Lived

by Hendrik Willem van Loon



1 About the year 500 B.C. people in most countries were ruled by cruel kings and dictators. But the people who lived in the little city-state of Athens in what is now Greece developed the world's first democratic society where people could live in freedom and equality and make their own laws. The society was far from perfect. Only the freemen in Athens had all the rights of citizens. Still, it was the best attempt at democratic living that had been made up to that time. In the selection below, Athenian life is described.

2 Democracy in Greece was only for one group of citizens—the free people. Every Greek city was composed of free citizens, a large number of slaves, and a sprinkling of foreigners.

3 At rare intervals (usually during a war when men were needed for the army) the Greeks were willing to give the rights of citizenship to the foreigners, or "barbarians" as they were called. But this was an exception, because in general citizenship was a matter of birth. You were an Athenian because your father and your grandfather had been Athenian before you. No matter how talented you were and no matter how rich, if you were born of non-Athenian parents you remained a "foreigner" all your life.

- 4 The classes of society were also very rigid among those born in Athens. The freeborn citizens were hereditary masters and all the slaves were hereditary servants. Everyone knew his or her place in this society and people did not move from one class to another.
- 5 The Greek city, therefore, was run by and for the free citizens, and this would not have been possible without the large number of slaves who performed all those jobs that we spend most of our time and energy doing if we wish to make a living.
- 6 The slaves did the cooking and baking for the city. They were the tailors and the carpenters and craftsmen and teachers and bookkeepers. They tended the shops and looked after the factories.
- 7 It is true that the position of those slaves who did the farming was a very unpleasant one. But the average freeman who had come down in the world and now had to hire himself out as a farmhand led just as miserable a life. In the cities many of the slaves lived better than many of the free. For the Greeks, who loved moderation in all things, did not like to treat their slaves after the fashion that later was so common in Rome. (In Rome a slave had as few rights as a machine in a modern factory and could be thrown to the wild animals upon the smallest excuse.)
- 8 The Greeks thought of slavery as a necessary institution without which no city could become the home of a truly civilized people. The slaves took care of those duties that today are performed by business and professional people. The free people meanwhile went to public meetings to vote and discuss questions of war and peace. Or they visited the theater to see the latest play or hear a discussion of the playwright Euripides, who had dared to express certain doubts about the omnipotence (unlimited power) of the great god Zeus.
- 9 The Greeks, who understood the value of leisure, had reduced household duties to the minimum by living in extremely simple surroundings. To begin with, their homes were very plain. Even the rich spent their lives in simple stucco buildings.
- 10 A Greek house was built round an open courtyard. At the front was a hall with a door that led into the street, but no windows. The rooms for preparing food, sleeping, and living were built round the sides and back of the courtyard, in which there were a small fountain or a statue and a few plants to make it look bright.
- 11 Many of the family activities took place in this courtyard unless, of course, it was too cold or was raining. In one corner of the courtyard the cook, who was a slave, prepared the meal while in another corner the teacher, who was also a slave, taught the children their alpha beta gammas (alphabet) and the multiplication tables.
- 12 In still another corner the lady of the house, helped by seamstresses who were slaves, repaired the family's clothes. The women in general led very quiet lives. As girls they received no formal education, only instruction in household tasks. They enjoyed little recreation, and in fact rarely left the house. It was considered improper for a married woman to be seen on the street too often.
- 13 In the little office just off the courtyard the master would inspect the accounts brought to him by the manager of his farm, who was of course a slave.
- 14 When dinner was ready, the family dined together, but the meal was a very simple one and did not take much time. The Greeks seem to have regarded eating as something that had to be done and not as a pastime to kill boring hours by eating all that one could hold.
- 15 The Greeks ate bread and cheese and a little meat with some green vegetables. They drank water only when nothing else was available, because they did not think it was very healthy. They loved to visit one another during mealtimes. But one of the main reasons was to talk. The Greeks loved talking and discussing every subject under the sun. They often talked about the gods, about friendship and how one could decide between what was a "good" deed and what was a "bad" deed.
- 16 The same moderation they showed in food, the Greeks showed in clothes. They liked to be clean and well-groomed. The men had their hair and beards neatly cut and kept their bodies strong and well. Both the men and women wore long robes that were brown or, for formal occasions, bleached white. The women would sometimes wear ornaments when at home, but the Greeks thought it vulgar to display their wealth in public.
- 17 The story of Greek life is a story of both moderation and simplicity. Our material possessions such as houses, furniture, books, and cars take up a great deal of the owner's time and attention. They have to be polished, brushed, painted, mended, and guarded. The Greeks would probably feel that we are not so much the owners of property as slaves to our possessions.
- 18 The Greeks wanted to be free in both body and mind. So that they could keep their liberty and be truly free in spirit, they reduced their daily needs to the lowest possible point and they took good care of their bodies through constant exercising.

## How V

Below c  
have be  
seems li  
a staten

1 You  
pare  
zen

2 You  
whet

3 You  
also

4 You  
prob

5 You  
prob

6 You  
You

7 You  
an

8 You  
era

9 You  
she

## How Well Did You Read?

Below are some statements about how your life might have been had you lived in ancient Athens. If a statement seems likely (or in agreement with the story), write *Yes*. If a statement seems unlikely, write *No*.

- 1 You were born outside of Athens. Now you leave your parents and move to Athens. You will become a citizen of this city-state.
- 2 You are a citizen of Athens. Your children will choose whether to become freemen or slaves.
- 3 You are a slave in Athens. Your children will be slaves also.
- 4 You are a slave in Athens. The jobs you perform will probably not be very important.
- 5 You are one of the average citizens of Athens. You probably value simplicity.
- 6 Your job is to design a house for a citizen of Athens. Your plans will probably include a courtyard.
- 7 You are a woman and a citizen of Athens. You lead an active public life.
- 8 You are a citizen of Athens. You probably eat moderately and dress simply.
- 9 You are a wealthy citizen of Athens. Your wealth is shown by your many possessions.

## Learn about Words

### Vocabulary

- A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 state of being equal (1)
- 2 made up (2)
- 3 spaces of time between (3)
- 4 firm; fixed; inflexible (4)
- 5 temperance; restraint (7)
- 6 least amount (9)
- 7 activities for pleasure (12)
- 8 crude; showing bad taste or bad manners (16)

- B** A word may have more than one meaning.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a**, **b**, or **c**. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 9 **classes** (4)
  - a instructional sessions
  - b groups of students
  - c social ranks or divisions
- 10 **office** (13)
  - a room where one works
  - b duty of one's position
  - c act of kindness or unkindness

## Word Study

- C** The fox was **in the henhouse**.  
I pointed **to the picture**.

The words in **heavy type** are prepositional phrases. Every prepositional phrase begins with a preposition (such as *in* or *to*) and ends with a noun. Some other common prepositions are *at*, *by*, *for*, *into*, *of*, and *up*. If the words in **heavy type** below are prepositional phrases, write *PP*. If they are not, write *No*.

- 11 Mickie walked **into the theater**.  
12 I ate lunch **at home**.  
13 **Help me** peel the potatoes.  
14 We camped **by the stream**.  
15 Please **lock the door** when you leave.  
16 The bird perched in the tree and sang **for an hour**.  
17 The snow melted **when the sun came out**.  
18 I sold the car **to my mother**.
- D** Here are some more common prepositions: *before*, *after*, *over*, *under*, *about*, and *like*. Each sentence below contains two words in **heavy type**. If the two words are prepositions, write *Prep*. If they are not prepositions, write *No*.
- 19 She sat **under** a tree **in** the garden.  
20 The **baby** played with her **toys**.  
21 We went **into** the house **by** the back door.  
22 We waited **at** the entrance **to** the theater.  
23 I bought **you** a **new** table.  
24 Don't **crinkle that** paper.  
25 Jayne drove **under** the bridge **to** grandma's house.  
26 Ellen **and** Sol skated on **the** pond.

- E** They served **peas and carrots**.  
Would you like to eat **now or** wait **awhile**?

The words *and* and *or* are conjunctions. Conjunctions are words that are used to connect other words or groups of words. In these examples, the word *and* connects the words *peas* and *carrots*. The word *or* connects the phrases *eat now* and *wait awhile*. Other common conjunctions are *but* and *for*. Read the sentences below. The words or word groups that need to be joined are in *italic type*. Choose the conjunction that makes the most sense. Write the conjunction.

- 27 We saw horses, cows, (*or*, *and*) pigs on the farm.  
28 Beth would like to pass the test, (*but*, *and*) she can't remember the answers.  
29 I can come to the party, (*for*, *but*) I found the present I wanted to give.  
30 Put the mouse outside (*but*, *or*) I won't come in.  
31 The ship tossed (*and*, *for*) rolled on the rough sea.  
32 Jan rushed to the bus depot, (*but*, *or*) her bus had left.  
33 Val put a dish, a plate, (*for*, *and*) a cup on the table.